

STATE OF MAINE  
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Docket No. 2000-94

February 29, 2000

Appeal of Consumer Assistance  
Division Decision #1998-6169 Regarding  
Bell Atlantic-Maine

ORDER ON APPEAL

WELCH, Chairman; NUGENT, and DIAMOND Commissioners

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## I. Summary

In this Order we uphold the January 26, 2000 decision of the Consumer Assistance Division (CAD) establishing a payment arrangement for customer **Customer**, for past due amounts owed to Bell Atlantic-Maine (BA).

## II. Background

On October 19, 1998, **Customer** sought assistance from CAD because BA had disconnected his service. **Customer** also stated he disputed some of the past due amounts on his account. At that time, he owed BA more than \$1900. CAD established a temporary payment arrangement to allow the service to be reconnected.

CAD asked BA to provide his telephone records back to 1995. In reviewing the records, CAD discovered that in April of 1998, BA attempted to remove from his account charges for Yellow Pages directory service so that they could be billed separately. BA inadvertently removed \$1,272 rather than the \$426 attributable to Yellow Pages charges. To correct the error, in May 1998 it charged \$845 back to the account, the difference between the two amounts. Because of the confusion this caused, Bell Atlantic agreed to an additional good will adjustment of \$350.00. The current amount now owed is \$1472.35.

On January 26, 2000, CAD established a new payment arrangement requiring the payment of \$100 each month towards the overdue amount, plus timely payments of current charges. On January 31, 2000, **Customer** appealed the decision stating he disputed charges before 1997.

## II. DISCUSSION and DECISION

**Customer** has never identified any specific charge he disputes or the reason for the dispute. A review of billing records from 1995 forward shows that he sometimes failed to pay the entire amount due, therefore gradually accumulating a large past due amount. A customer disputing a charge should contact the utility upon receiving a bill containing the amount in question and attempt to resolve the dispute with the utility. If it cannot be satisfactorily resolved, the customer may seek further assistance from CAD. In this case, CAD reviewed past records and discovered one mistake, which the utility had already corrected. BA further offered a good will adjustment.

The payment arrangement CAD established for the remaining balance is a reasonable one. Therefore, we uphold CAD's January 26, 2000 decision and decline to investigate this matter further.

Dated at Augusta, Maine, this 29th day of February, 2000.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

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Dennis L. Keschl  
Administrative Director

COMMISSIONERS VOTING FOR: Welch

Nugent  
Diamond

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5 M.R.S.A. § 9061 requires the Public Utilities Commission to give each party to an adjudicatory proceeding written notice of the party's rights to review or appeal of its decision made at the conclusion of the adjudicatory proceeding. The methods of review or appeal of PUC decisions at the conclusion of an adjudicatory proceeding are as follows:

1. Reconsideration of the Commission's Order may be requested under Section 1004 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure (65-407 C.M.R.110) within 20 days of the date of the Order by filing a petition with the Commission stating the grounds upon which reconsideration is sought.
2. Appeal of a final decision of the Commission may be taken to the Law Court by filing, within 30 days of the date of the Order, a Notice of Appeal with the Administrative Director of the Commission, pursuant to 35-A M.R.S.A. § 1320 (1)-(4) and the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 73 et seq.
3. Additional court review of constitutional issues or issues involving the justness or reasonableness of rates may be had by the filing of an appeal with the Law Court, pursuant to 35-A M.R.S.A. § 1320 (5).

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